

The Rarity of Human life

According to Buddhism, we have gained a very rare and auspicious moment (*Khana Sampatti*) which is this period that we can listen to the Buddha's message. We have received not only a human life, but a complete life without any serious trouble, good environment which has no big problems such as wars, intelligence that we can understand what the Buddha says, good parents who gave us a good birth and a proper period that we can listen to the Buddha's message. If a person could get all of these rare chances in the same time as a human being, he can celebrate every day in his whole life as happy as his birth day. This moment with these all facilities is a very rare chance although we have any other big problems, even we have no legs and hands. If we know the value of all these, we are full with happiness.

Buddhism explains four very rare benefits that we have already received in our life.

*Kicco manussa patilabho kiccam maccana jeewitam,
Kiccam saddhamma savanam kicco Buddhnam uppada.* (Dhammapada)

Having birth as a human being is rare, hard is the life of mortals, listening to the sublime truth is rare, appearance of a Buddha is rare.

Actually in this period, all of us are very lucky because we have fulfilled all above things. We have had those things not easily but very rarely as the result of a lot of good karmas in our previous lives. When we think the rarity of them, we can wake up every day as our birth day with joy, removing tears and sufferings.

Why birth as a human being is rare? When we compare other beings like fish, birds and ants with humans, we can see very clearly that humans are few. Even among the humans, complete human life like us is so rare. Being born as a human being is the result of a higher mental condition.

Not only having a birth like this is rare but spending this life through difficulties is also hard. We may have more merits that we have done in previous lives to live long with this life. If we didn't have that fortune, we are not here as elders. We would have lost this valuable opportunity in many reasons that we faced if we hadn't enough merits.

With all these facilities, if someone can listen to what the Buddha taught, it is also rare. What did the Buddha teach? He taught the path to purify the mind, how we can get rid of all kinds of sufferings. The Buddha's message that leads to getting rid of unsatisfactoriness and achieve real happiness is very clear. It is well expounded (*Svakkhato*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akaliko*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Vinnuhi*). To achieve final bliss of liberation, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge, and we have to reflect on that knowledge through our life.

The Buddha explains two truths which are the conventional truth and the ultimate truth. The conventional truth depends on common things in the world. According to the conventional truth, we think, 'before we were born in the world, the world was there, and also after we die, the world will be there.' According to the conventional truth someone, who has the knowledge of karmic law, can do merits with pure mind, and he may be reborn as a human being or a divine person. Even though we can receive a good life with facilities doing good deeds, still we are in ignorance that should be overcome with wisdom. Also still we are in the sansaric circle. That is why we have to achieve the second step of the truth. When we realize the ultimate truth, our wisdom grows up to a higher level.

The ultimate truth depends on deep truth that describes cause and effect or the dependent origination. It is a very interesting and remarkable teaching. The world arises at the moment with the conditions, and it ceases at the moment when conditions are away. If we get some kinds of experience through our senses such as eyes, ear, nose, as forms, sounds, smells that experience arises at the moment and it ceases at the moment without anything remaining. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence** (අනුත්වා සම්භවං භුත්වා න භවිස්සති). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illuminates.

This is a very special teaching that a Buddha explains to the world as a real path to overcome suffering. With this knowledge, if someone can apply this to his life, and reflect on his life, he can gradually overcome suffering. We mostly suffer about our past or future. When we remember our past or future, we go to the real experience and we play the role and we are the players of the drama, then we suffer or enjoy as they are still happening. As soon as we remember something, if we are clever to understand, that now I am reading my own mind, I am in my past or future, then we don't go to the real situation to suffer. Little by little we have to practice this understanding. For that we have to increase mindfulness or awareness and wisdom or intelligence to the maximum level or as much as we can.

The other rare thing is the appearing of a Buddha. We are able to listen to this message because of the appearing of a Buddha. Without an appearing of a Buddha we can never listen to this ultimate truth. If a person would like to become a Buddha, he has to fulfil a lot of especial noble qualities during a vast period. It is even difficult to think. We are so fortunate when we live in such a period. Even though the Buddha passed away, still his teaching is in the world. Appearing Buddha's message means appearing the Buddha. Therefore we consider this is the period that the Buddha lives. If someone lives in the world with all these rare things, Buddhism says it is a very rare and auspicious, valuable moment (*Khana Sampatti*). Buddhism advises us not to lose this valuable moment. If someone loses it without gaining any results, he has to worry.

Because of ignorance and no mindfulness, we mostly think happiness is in the future. We always run towards the future thinking happiness is there. So we are so tired finding happiness. We have no chance to enjoy in the present moment. If we know the Buddha's message is to be happy in the present moment, if someone can understand the nature of our life is arising and ceasing of all our experience every moment, he is happy. He has nothing to get angry or get attached. He is free from suffering. He is the person who lives really in the present without any desire to the world but doing all his duties and responsibilities better than he did before.

For this comprehension and to achieve real understanding, we have to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue
2. Tranquility
3. Wisdom

Virtue means good discipline in our speech and behavior. With the understanding of real liberation, we try to spend a moral life in the name of real happiness. Spending a moral life helps us to live with an easy life. Because of right understanding the disciplined person uses meditation techniques for concentration and mindfulness. With a concentrated mind, he sees the world reality as impermanence. Living in the present moment with mindfulness he sees every experience that he receives arising and ceasing at the moment when conditions combine and separate. When a wise person achieves this noble understanding, he has nothing to grasp with desire or hate with anger. His mind is completely in the present moment and balanced with tranquility. This noble path helps us to live in peace among sorrow and delight without suffering or unsatisfactoriness.

May the triple gem bless you!

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(Tuesday Dhamma sermon at LA Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena)